

“Remember this day on which you departed from Egypt... Today you are leaving in the month of springtime.” (13:3-4)

We are enjoined to remember the liberation from Egypt and to relate it constantly. Interestingly, the Torah seems to emphasize the fact that we were redeemed *b'chodesh ha'aviv*, in the spring. This is part and parcel of the *geulah*, liberation. It must be stressed again and again that we left during the spring. *Rashi* explains that we were redeemed in the spring, at a time when it is not cold or hot, or rainy. Indeed, at a time when the climate is perfect.

When we think about it, however, the fact that we left Egypt in the spring is secondary to the actual liberation and its ensuing miracles. Furthermore, *Chazal* note, “See the *chesed*, kindness, that He granted you,” in regard to the “perfect” time for taking us from Egypt. This kindness is certainly laudatory, but is it to be mentioned in the same breath with the miracles surrounding the Exodus? Apparently, there is a significant lesson to be derived from this unique “*chesed*.”

Horav Chaim Goldvicht, z.l., distinguishes between the concepts of *gemilas chesed*, acts of loving-kindness, and *rachamanus*, acts of compassion. In the *Talmud Yevamos 79a*, *Chazal* state that there are three distinguishing characteristics by which we can identify a Jew: *rachanim*, compassionate; *baishanim*, having a sense of shame, embarrassment – they can easily blush; *gomlei chasadim*, they perform acts of loving-kindness.

To the average person, *rachanim* and *gomlei chasadim* are one and the same. The one who acts kindly is compassionate. He who has compassion acts lovingly towards his fellow man. Why are these two similar features considered separately?

We derive from here that *rachmanus* and *chesed* are the same characteristic. The *Zohar HaKadosh* defines a *chasid* as one who is *mischaseid im Kono*, acts with kindness towards his Creator. Certainly the concept of *rachamim*, compassion, does not apply in our relationship vis-à-vis Hashem. Yet, a concept of *chesed* does apply.

The *pasuk* in *Mishlei 11:17* reads, *Gomel nafsho ish chesed*, “A man of kindness brings good upon himself.” *Chazal* explain that the great *Tanna*, Hillel, viewed his body as a holy receptacle, catering to the needs of the *neshamah*, soul. We must, therefore, say that *rachamim* is an act of reciprocity whereby one manifests compassion for another human being. *Chesed*, on the other hand, is a sensitivity one demonstrates without provocation from another source. If one notices someone who is suffering, he has *rachmanus* on him and responds accordingly. When the reason for the *rachmanus* disappears, so does the compassion. Furthermore, even the most sensitive person, if confronted with pain and suffering on a constant basis, will, eventually lose some of his compassion. His sensitivity becomes numbed by too much exposure to pain.

The *gomer chesed* is different. He acts out of the kindness of his heart. *Chesed* is a characteristic within a person who seeks to perform kindness, to help others. He does not need external motivation to act. The *baal chesed* acts out of his own sense of duty. He wants to help others, even if they do not seek help or realize that they need his assistance. This may be noted from Avraham *Avinu* who helped the three Arabs/angels who he felt were in need of spiritual assistance, even though they did not apparently think so. Avraham was troubled when he lacked the opportunity or ability to be *gomer chesed* with others.

In explaining the *pasuk* in *Mishlei*, *Chazal* teach us that one can perform *chesed* even with oneself! The soul cannot be elevated as long as the body demands its physical gratification. Thus, when one addresses the needs of his body, he is essentially performing a kindness to his *neshamah*. Shlomo *Ha'melech* tells us that one can be a *gomer nefesh*, act with *chesed* towards his soul by giving assistance to his body. Now that we see a clear line of demarcation between *chesed* and *rachamim*, we can begin to understand the relationship of *chesed* to *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the exodus from Egypt. *Rav Goldvicht* explains that if one were to examine the earlier *pesukim* in which Hashem states that He saw the Jews' affliction, listened to their cries and understood their pain, the implication clearly is that the Exodus had its genesis in Hashem's *rachamim*. This compassion evoked Hashem's response - *yetzias Mitzrayim*. An exodus based upon the *middah*, attribute, of *rachamim* is *metzutzam*, somewhat suppressed and constrained.

Hashem went a step further. He redeemed *Klal Yisrael* with the *middah* of *chesed*. While it is true that the original stimulation was *Klal Yisrael's* pain and suffering, it evoked an overwhelming response of *chesed*. True, a nation that has heretofore been subjected to harsh, spirit-breaking labor is only too happy to be redeemed. The fact that this redemption took place during a propitious time just adds to the event. The most significant aspect, however – the aspect that concerns them most – is the actual redemption. Everything else is “frosting on the cake.”

We now have a more profound understanding of this aspect of the redemption. It is an indication of the *sheleimus ha'geulah*, completeness, perfection of the redemption. Hashem redeemed them with *chesed*, demonstrating His boundless love for *Klal Yisrael*. *Yetzias Mitzrayim* was an outpouring of unmitigated kindness to Hashem's Chosen People. His love for *Klal Yisrael* was manifest in the fact that He saw to it that every aspect of the *geulah* would be favorable.

This should serve as a standard in our interpersonal relationships with people. Our friend should not have to fall into poverty, illness, or serious trouble before we reach out to help him. That is compassion; we respond when there is a need. Rather, we should act with *chesed*, in which we look for opportunities to reach out. Indeed, if that were to be the case, we might very well prevent the need for *rachmanus*.